

VZCZCXRO5788
OO RUEHCHI RUEHCN RUEHDT RUEHHM
DE RUEHBK #0209/01 0271028
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 271028Z JAN 09
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5829
INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS IMMEDIATE
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING IMMEDIATE 6718
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA IMMEDIATE 9382
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL IMMEDIATE 5231
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO IMMEDIATE 1342
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON IMMEDIATE 2583
RUEKJCS/CJCS WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI IMMEDIATE
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BANGKOK 000209

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/27/2019

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PBTS](#) [TH](#) [CB](#)

SUBJECT: THAI-CAMBODIAN BORDER DISPUTE: THAI FM KASIT'S
VISIT TO CAMBODIA PRODUCES OPTIMISTIC STATEMENTS

Classified By: DCM James F. Entwistle, reasons 1.4 (b, d).

11. (U) Summary: A January 26 visit to Cambodia by Thai FM Kasit Piromya produced positive statements by both sides regarding the ongoing border dispute centered on territory around the Preah Vihear temple. Kasit met Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen and Foreign Minister Hor Namhong; press reports indicated that the two sides agreed to hold Joint Border Commission (JBC) talks to discuss border demarcation and Defense Minister meetings to discuss the number of troops stationed along the border in early February. The two sides also agreed to hold talks in March regarding overlapping maritime claims in the Gulf of Thailand.

12. (C) Comment: Before his appointment as Foreign Minister in late 2008, Kasit had made critical comments concerning previous Thai governments' actions regarding the Preah Vihear border dispute during rallies by the then anti-government People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD). Kasit had also been critical of Hun Sen personally. Because of these comments, many observers were skeptical of Kasit's ability to work well with Cambodian leaders to solve the border dispute. FM Kasit's apparently productive introductory visit appears to have addressed these concerns, and demonstrated that the relationship Kasit developed with Hun Sen during the 1989-91 Paris Peace Conference as fellow negotiators remains an asset that could prove useful during coming border talks. End Summary and Comment.

FM KASIT TO PHNOM PENH - BETTER THAN EXPECTED?

13. (U) Media reports indicated that Thai Foreign Minister Kasit Piromya's January 26 visit to Phnom Penh resulted in positive developments in the ongoing Thai-Cambodian border dispute. Cambodian Foreign Minister Hor Namhong and Kasit reportedly agreed that Thailand and Cambodia would resolve the border dispute "quickly through peaceful means." The Foreign Ministers were also reported to have agreed that Thai Defense Minister Prawit Wongsuwan would visit Cambodia February 6 to discuss with Cambodian Defense Minister Tea Banh the redeployment of soldiers stationed at the temple. The Foreign Ministers reportedly also agreed that the JBC would meet February 2-4 to discuss the border dispute and to have a technical commission look at a maritime dispute. The maritime talks are planned for March. Kasit publicly quoted Hun Sen as saying it was the two countries' joint duty and responsibility to move Thai-Cambodian relations forward for

the well-being of ASEAN.

¶4. (C) Note: Agreement to work out the Thai-Cambodian maritime dispute in the Gulf of Thailand could be important, since significant gas and oil reserves reportedly may be found in the area of the overlapping claims. Joint exploration by Thailand and Malaysia of an analogous area in the Gulf of Thailand, setting aside previously acrimonious debate over fixing the Thai-Malay maritime boundary, has been mutually beneficial to both countries. End note.

¶5. (C) MFA East Asian Affairs Department Deputy Director-General Pisanu Suvanajata, who accompanied Kasit, told us January 27 that the visit had been much more productive than the Thai had expected. Cambodian leaders appeared to focus on creating an atmosphere for constructive engagement between the two countries, rather than resorting to the often fiery rhetoric that characterized public statements in 2008. Cambodian officials had also demonstrated flexible positions on all issues, and discussions at all levels had been smooth and fruitful, Pisanu said. Cambodian leaders had discounted Kasit's rhetorical attacks on Hun Sen during a PAD rally last year and had shown diplomatic acumen in working to further relationships with Thailand's new government.

NO QUICK SOLUTIONS

¶6. (C) Pisanu expressed confidence in Kasit's ability to handle the bilateral talks effectively due to his long

BANGKOK 00000209 002 OF 002

history of working with Cambodian leaders. On the other hand, Pisanu was tempered in his assessment over prospects for quick resolution of the contentious issues. Talks could go on for quite some time, Pisanu predicted; the success of negotiations would likely depend more on the Thai government than on Cambodia, because Thai domestic political conflicts could prove to be an obstacle in resolving the issues.
JOHN